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ABSTRACT

There is evidence that those who seek employment during difficult times, but are not successful, will continue to experience ongoing hardships throughout their working lives, often developing an ongoing dependency on the social safety net. This digest describes two federal programs on the youth employment front: (1) Youth Service Canada (YSC), aimed at putting out-of-school and unemployed young people back to work; and (2) Youth Internship Program, which supports new, entry-level training programs for occupations in expanding industries. In 1994, YSC engaged over 1,100 unemployed youth in productive community service work terms which provided a weekly stipend and a completion grant in the form of a voucher. The Youth Internship Program will offer internships to high school students, high school graduates, and early school leavers who are looking for training or work opportunities. Internships will consist of school-based training, community-based training, or entry-level training in industry sectors. Both programs contain career and skills development components, with participants provided special services in such fields as career planning and counseling, career and labor market information, volunteer adult mentors, and transition assistance. (RB)

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New Federal Youth Initiatives in Canada

An ERIC Digest

by Sharron Hanna & Lisa Dornan

1995

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON Counseling And Student Services

ERIC DIGEST

1995 EDO-CG-95-42

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Overview

Statistics Canada recently confirmed that young people were the hardest hit by the 1990-92 recession and are finding it increasingly difficult to find employment (Sunter, 1994). For example, the 1993 youth unemployment rate of 17.8% is the highest annual rate since the 1983 rate of 19.8%. The 1993 rate would be even higher if youth had persisted in their job searches instead of "giving up" and withdrawing from the labor market. College and university graduates are also experiencing greater difficulty in securing jobs.

The inability of young people to form a serious attachment to the labor market can have grave consequences. There is evidence that those who seek employment during difficult times, but are not successful, will continue to experience ongoing hardships throughout their working lives, often developing an ongoing dependency on the social safety net.

Investing in youth

The Canadian federal government's youth employment and learning strategy sets out several educational and training priorities which, together, offers young Canadians direction as they prepare for the future labor market. The strategy included two key elements on the youth employment front:

1. **Youth Service Canada** aimed at putting out-of-school and unemployed young people back to work.

2. **Youth Internship Program** supported new, entry-level training programs for occupations in expanding industries.

Youth Service Canada

Young people today face a frustrating dilemma: one needs experience to get a job, but without a job, one cannot get experience. "The proportion of Youths who have never held a job rose sharply from 10% in November 1989 to 16% in November 1993" (Sunter, p. 32). Youth Service Canada (YSC) aims to address this dilemma using a three-pronged approach:

- Strengthen young people's sense of accomplishment, self-reliance, and self-esteem.
- Enable young people to gain meaningful work experience, while using and improving their personal and work-related skills, through service to their community and their country.
- Build stronger communities and a better Canada by enabling young people to address issues of concern to youth and by building a greater awareness of Canada's diversity.

Four streams were identified as priorities in YSC:

1. Community Development and Learning
2. Sustainable Development and Environment
3. Tulu (personal development)
4. Entrepreneurship.

During the spring and summer of 1994, 67 lead-site projects were officially launched, engaging over 1,100 unemployed youth in productive community service work terms lasting from 6-9 months. Participants received a weekly stipend and a completion grant in the form of a voucher, valued at no less than $2,000 which could be redeemed to cover the costs of going back to school;, subsidize wages at another job, pay for daycare while working, cover travel costs to get a job or move to another job, use as collateral for a small business loan, or repay student loans.

Youth Internship Program

In its 1992 study of education and training in Canada, the Economic Council of Canada observed that "Canada has one of the worst records of school-to-work transition. School leavers find a job by trial and error, often wasting their own and society's resources in the process" (ECC, 1992, p. 18). Approximately 60% of youth now enter the labor market directly from high school with no additional structured education or training. However, it is estimated that in Canada, almost half of the new jobs created by the year 2000 will require at least 17 years of education and training.

The Youth Internship Program will target young people who choose technical/vocational training over an academic post-secondary education, and will include

high school students, high school graduates, and early school leavers who are looking for training or work opportunities. The program began in 1994–95 with a demonstration phase to test a variety of entry–level training programs. Internships will be offered as follows:

- Industry sectors: Sector Councils represent industry workers and employers and establish skill standards and training programs. Entry–level training programs will be offered for studies in the environment, logistics, automotive repair, horticulture, and tourism sectors. Other national Sector Councils that have shown interest in developing entry–level training models are the electrical and software sectors.
- School–based training: High school and post–secondary co–operative education programs will be expanded and refocused, particularly in technical/vocational areas. The idea is for school boards, colleges, and employers to develop more comprehensive programs providing a combination of both classroom and workplace skills training.
- Community–based training: Entry–level training projects will be led by private and public sector associations, non–governmental organizations, and education and training institutions driven at the community level. Programs will be based on common standards recognized across Canada.

Counseling: Some Criteria

Human Resources Development Canada is supporting the "Building Better Career Counselling" initiative of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation (CGCF) to ensure that career development resources developed under the Creation And Mobilization of Counselling Resources for Youth (CAMCRY) and Stay In School (SIS) programs become an integral part of the federal government's youth initiative. Of notable importance are the career and skills development components of Youth Service Canada and the Youth Internship Program. The provision/availability of career counseling was one of the several criteria considered in selecting and approving the best Youth Service Canada project proposals. Youth Service Canada participants will be provided with special services in such fields as career planning and counseling, career and labor market information, volunteer adult mentors, and transition assistance.

Youth Service Canada project coordinators will be able to access training in the use of the CGCF materials as they help young people build career action plans. The career counseling resources will provide a highly effective complement to the work experience acquired by Youth Service Canada participants. These youth will be equipped with the employability and career development skills needed to make smooth school–to–work transitions, informed career decisions, and hence, succeed in today's dynamic and challenging labor market.

Conclusion

Youth Service Canada and the Youth Internship Program supplement other noteworthy initiatives at the provincial and federal levels. All are aimed at improving the educational, training, career development, and employment opportunities facing unemployed and disadvantaged youth across Canada. Youth Service Canada and the Youth Internship Program are unfolding in tandem with other efforts to modernize Canada's training and learning system. These programs offer clear pathways for participants to become self–sufficient by establishing a strong connection with the labor market. In this way, the program will help young people break both the mounting dependency on passive social assistance and cycle of "false starts" on the labor market.

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